

1201 INTERVIEWING ALLEGED VICTIMS

Chapter: **Child Protective Field Services**

Section: **CPS Family Assessments**



New Hampshire Division for Children, Youth and Families Policy Manual

Policy Directive: **08-03**

Approved:

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Maggie Bishop, Director

Related Statute(s): **RSA 169-C**

Related Admin Rule(s):

Related Federal Regulation(s):

Related Form(s): **FORM 2257**

Bridges' Screen(s) and Attachment(s):

Purpose

To describe the process and requirements of assessing referrals of child abuse and neglect. The primary goal of the assessment process is to ensure the safety of the child(ren).

Policy

- I. All children in the household must be met or observed by the CPSW to help assess the validity of the referral and to make a determination about whether they are in imminent danger. This contact may take place in the child's home, in a medical facility, in a school, in a child advocacy center, or in another setting where the child may be located. Ideally, the child needs to be interviewed in an (neutral) uninfluenced, non-threatening, private, quiet place that is free from interruptions. To minimize additional trauma, it is important that the interview is not conducted where the abuse/neglect is alleged to have taken place.
- II. When possible and appropriate, at least one of the child's parents or legal guardians is to be advised that the CPSW will meet with the child. The CPSW is to provide them with an explanation of the meeting and the intended use of the information.
- III. Prior parental notification is not advisable or required under certain circumstances such as:
 - A. Child sexual and/or severe physical abuse has occurred in the home and the alleged perpetrator is a member of the household, a relative, or friend of the family (RSA 169-C: 38, IV)
 - B. Parents could not be contacted within the time period that the assessment needed to be commenced.
 - C. There are concerns that the parents have failed to protect the victim.
 - D. Notifying the parent places the child at further risk.
- IV. Supervisory approval and documentation is required if the CPSW believes there to be other legitimate reasons not to notify the family prior to the interview.
- V. Interviews of children conducted without prior parental notification must either be videotaped or audio taped (RSA 169-C: 38V). The CPSW must make every effort to and document the efforts to notify at least one parent or guardian within 24 hours of the interview occurring. Whenever possible, subsequent notification of parent or guardian is to be made in person the same day the interview occurs, taking the opportunity to explain the allegations contained in the referral, provide

a copy of the Family Rights Brochure (Form 2257) and the general results of the interview. In addition the CPSW needs to address questions and concerns which the parent or guardian may have and assess any safety or risk issues to the children in the home.

- VI. The CPSW must consider the following when interviewing a child victim:
 - A. Always show the child respect for themselves and their parents and recognize and support the importance of the parent to the child. It is necessary to establish a rapport with the child and attempt to make the child feel at ease.
 - B. Questions and discussions are to be kept in simple language appropriate for the child's age and level of development. Be aware of what is considered normal childhood behavior for various ages and assess the child's overall understanding of the situation.
 - C. Questions must be non-leading and open ended. The child must not be pressed for answers or details. Non-verbal materials such as drawings or puppets may be used.
 - D. Assess the child's speech and language skills, mental abilities and motor skills. Be aware and document any developmental delays that the child may have.
 - E. Be alert to any psychological stress the child may be experiencing.
- VII. The interview with the child must include a discussion of what will happen next and how the CPSW will use the information. The CPSW is to avoid making any promises to the child; such as guaranteeing their safety or that they will not have to go home. The child who has been interviewed without parental consent must be informed that the parent/guardian will be notified that the interview has taken place. The CPSW should gather information from the child regarding the possible parental/guardian reaction to determine the child's safety and a review of future safety planning should occur.
- VIII. Information to be obtained from the child, if possible, includes:
 - A. Time, date, and place of occurrence. With young children, dates and times may be more easily related to television shows, holidays, or seasons.
 - B. Who was involved;
 - C. How the incident occurred;
 - D. Frequency or duration;
 - E. A description of the incident of abuse or neglect. Age appropriate techniques, such as non-verbal materials, or anatomically correct drawings, may be used; and
 - F. Whether other household members were present, and if not, where the child believes they were.
- IX. Alleged injuries must be observed and documented. If it is necessary for the child to remove his or her clothing this procedure is to be explained in a non-threatening, comforting way. The CPSW should ask permission from the child to observe the injuries. The CPSW must obtain the assistance of a second professional in this situation, preferably in the medical field (such as school nurse or doctor) to view and document injuries if any clothing is to be removed.